

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 00820 041629Z

63

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02

OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 FEA-01 /083 W

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R 041500Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7999

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, OAS, VE, AR

SUBJECT: PUBLIC REACTION TO CANCELLATION OF MARCH MFM

1. ONE INTERESTING PUBLIC REACTION TO THE CANCELLATION OF THE MARCH MFM HAS BEEN PRESS COMMENTS OVER ROLE VENEZUELA PLAYED IN FINAL GOA DECISION. IN WEEK BEFORE VIGNES ANNOUNCED DECISION, LA OPINION CARRIED ARTICLES THAT WERE CRITICAL OF VENEZUELA'S "OUT IN FRONT" POSITION REGARDING TRADE BILL. THRUST OF ARTICLE WAS THAT VENEZUELA, IN JOINING OPEC AND QUADRUPLING OIL PRICES (MOVES WHICH SERIOUSLY AFFECTED ECONOMY OF MANY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES INCLUDING ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY), HAD NOT SEEN FIT TO CONSULT WITH ANYONE. NOW THAT VENEZUELA HAS SEEN ITS INTEREST THREATENED BY TRADE ACT, IT WAS ENERGETICALLY APPEALING TO FELLOW LATIN AMERICANS FOR HEMISPHERIC UNITY AGAINST US "COERCIVE ACT". IN LIGHT OF THIS AND GIVEN RECENT VENEZUELAN EFFORTS TO USE ITS PETRO DOLLARS TO OBTAIN LEADERSHIP ROLE IN LATIN AMERICA, ARTICLE POSED QUESTIONS AS TO WHETHER OR NOT OTHER LATIN AMERICANS, BUT PARTICULARLY ARGENTINA, SHOULD NOT APPROACH ISSUES SUCH AS TRADE ACT MORE ON BASIS OF NATIONAL INTEREST THAN

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 00820 041629Z

OFTTIMES SPURIOUS HEMISPHERIC UNITY. FOLLOWING CANCELLATION OF

MFM, LA OPINION DID WRAP-UP PIECE ON LATIN AMERICAN RESPONSES TO VIGNES' DECISION WITH EMPHASIS ON VENEZUELAN REACTION. ATTENTION WAS DRAWN TO THE FACT THAT VENEZUELA CHARACTERIZED THE POSTPONEMENT AS A TRIUMPH FOR ITS DIPLOMATIC POSITION. THIS TRIUMPH, THE ARTICLE NOTED, WAS IN SOME WAYS ACHIEVED AT THE EXPENSE OF ARGENTINA, AND LEFT VENEZUELA FREE TO PURSUE ITS PRESENT HIGH PRICE OIL POLICY TOTALLY OUTSIDE OF HEMISPHERIC AMBIT. INDEED, ARTICLE WENT ON TO NOTE THAT WHILE HAVING HELPED TORPEDO MFM, VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS HAD QUICKLY HIED OFF TO WASHINGTON TO MAINTAIN CLOSE BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH US.

2. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH NEWSMEN WHO FOLLOW FOREIGN AFFAIRS CLOSELY, SOMEHAVE EXPRESSED UNEASE THEY NOTE WITHIN GOA FOREIGN MINISTRY OVER VENEZUELA'S NEW ACTIVIST STANCE. UNEASE GENERATED LESS BY FEAR THAT VENEZUELA WILL PREEMPT ARGENTINA ON CONTINENT AS KEY ACTOR THAN BY FEELING THAT EUPHORIA GENERATED BY NEW-FOUND WEALTH WILL IMPELL VENEZUELATO FURTHER MUCK UP ALREADY COMPLEX AND DELICATE HEMISPHERIC SITUATION.

3. ARTICLE CLOSED WITH ACID COMMENT THAT OVER-EMOTIONAL VENEZUELAN DIPLOMACY HAD LED TO PREMATURE IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS AGAINST CUBA IN 1964--A DECISION THAT IT HAD TAKEN A DECADE TO RECTIFY. LATIN AMERICANS SHOULD BE ALERT, IT CONCLUDED, THAT IN NEW VENEZUELAN ENTHUSIASM FOR LEADING HEMISPHERIC ROLE IT NOT AGAIN COMMIT LATIN AMERICANS TO SIMILAR INCORRECT POSITIONS.
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